

XXXI.—Notes on some of the rarer Western Palæarctic Birds. By H. E. DRESSER, F.L.S., F.Z.S.

THE study of ornithology has the great advantage of being practically endless, and every year opens out fresh fields to the student. Fresh material tends always to throw some new light on the subject, and however carefully an article may have been written, a lapse of a few years is sure to bring forward fresh facts rendering it necessary to largely revise, if not to re-write the information. When, in 1874, I prepared the article on *Sylvia melanocephala* in the 'Birds of Europe,' I deemed it advisable to unite with that species both *S. momus* and *S. mystacea*. In 1880 I ascertained that *S. momus* would have to be specifically separated from *S. melanocephala*, but from lack of material I decided to keep *S. mystacea* with it. Mr. Seebohm, the following year, in the Brit. Mus. Catalogue, followed my example. Since then, however, I have received three examples of the true *S. mystacea* from Dr. G. Radde, and have examined several other specimens. This fresh material has clearly demonstrated to me that *S. momus* and *S. mystacea* are specifically different. The old male of *S. momus* has the crown and nape of a very deep black, the division between the black and the grey of the back being very sharp and clear; the underparts are very white, with the very faintest vinous tinge on the abdomen, whereas the old male of *S. mystacea* has the crown and nape dull black, this colour gradually merging into the grey of the back on the nape; the chin and a line bordering the black (which extends below the eye as in *S. momus*) are pure white; the throat and breast are pale chestnut or dull vinous red, gradually fading on the abdomen to white, the flanks, however, being very pale reddish.

Sylvia momus is extremely close to *S. blanfordi*, of which only one specimen, the type, is known, and appears to differ chiefly in having the rectrices margined and tipped with white, the under surface of the tail in *S. blanfordi* being nearly black, and in having the legs yellowish brown, whereas in *S. blanfordi* they are said to be dark bluish grey,

	Culmen.	Wing.	Tail.	Tarsus.	
<i>Sylvia momus</i> , ♂, Jericho	0·5	2·15	2·2	0·75	Mus. H. B. Tristram.
„ „ ♀, Hebron	0·5	2·15	2·1	0·75	„ „
„ „ ♀, Damascus	0·5	2·18	2·2	0·75	„ „
„ „ ♀, Engedi	0·5	2·12	2·2	0·75	„ „
<i>Sylvia mystacea</i> , ♂, Lenkoran	0·48	2·35	2·1	0·75	Mus. H. E. Dresser.
„ „ ♂, Tedschen	0·5	2·3	2·2	0·75	„ „
„ „ ♂, Lenkoran	0·5	2·3	2·2	0·75	„ „
„ „ ♂, Shiraz	0·5	2·42	2·35	0·75	Mus. Brit.
„ „ ♀, „	0·48	2·3	2·2	0·75	„ „
„ „ ♂, Afghanistan	0·5	2·42	2·32	0·75	„ „
„ „ ♂, Fao	0·5	2·28	2·2	0·75	„ „
„ „ ♂, N. Africa?	0·5	2·35	2·3	0·75	„ „

and are black in the dried skin. *S. mystacea*, on the other hand, reminds one greatly of *S. subalpina* in general appearance, though it has the underparts much paler; but the white mystacal line is very clearly defined in both these species.

The measurements of the specimens examined are given on p. 361.

The last of the above-cited specimens is stated to have come from N. Africa, but no authority is given, and it is stated to have been purchased, so I give the locality with a query, this being the only record of *S. mystacea* having been obtained in N. Africa.

These two species differ also in the coloration of the soft parts. According to von Heuglin, *S. momus* has the legs yellowish red, the bare skin round the eye red, and the iris "*tum helvola tum lateritia*." On the labels of Canon Tristram's specimens of this species the iris is marked as being lemon-yellow, but he does not give any further particulars. In *S. mystacea* the beak is (according to Ménétriés) brown, the lower mandible yellow on the basal half, the iris clear chestnut-red, and the bare skin round the eye yellow; the legs isabelline, and the claws black. Blanford does not state the colour of the iris, but figures it as being reddish brown; the legs are, he says, brown.

In accordance with what has been stated above, the synonymy of these two Warblers will now stand as follows, viz.:—

SYLVIA MOMUS.

Curruca momus, Hempr. & Ehr. Symb. Phys. Av. i. fol. bb (1833).

Melizophilus nigricapillus, Cab. Mus. Hein. i. p. 35 (1850).

Sylvia bowmani, Tristram, Ibis, 1867, p. 85.

S. melanocephala minor, Heugl. Orn. N.O.-Afr. i. p. 303 (1869).

S. melanocephala nubia, Licht. fide Heugl. l. c.

S. melanocephala, Dresser, B. of Eur. i. p. 401 (1874) (nec Gmel.).

S. momus (Hempr. & Ehr.), Dresser, B. of Eur. i. p. 407 (1880, partim).

S. mystacea, Seebohm, Cat. Birds Brit. Mus. v. p. 20 (1881, partim).

SYLVIA MYSTACEA.

Sylvia mystacea, Ménétr. Cat. Rais. p. 34 (1832).

S. rubescens, Blanf. Ibis, 1874, p. 77; Eastern Persia, ii. p. 177, pl. xii.

S. momus, Dresser, B. of Eur. i. p. 407 (1880, partim).

S. mystacea, Ménétr., Seebohm, Cat. Birds Brit. Mus. v. p. 20 (1881, partim).

So far back as 1885 I received from Malta a very fine specimen of *Falco barbarus*, and I thought that I had recorded its occurrence. But Count Salvadori, who lately examined the specimen, remarked that he had not seen any record of it; and finding that I have never mentioned the fact, I take this opportunity of repairing the omission. The specimen was sent to me by Dr. David Bruce, who was then quartered at Malta. He wrote to me stating that he had purchased it in the flesh in the Valetta market on the 22nd April, 1885, and not knowing what it was, sent it to me for identification, and kindly made me a present of it. The bird is not quite in fully adult plumage, but has the rufous nape well developed, and the underparts but slightly marked with a few dark stripes.

In 1885 the late E. F. von Homeyer described as a new species (Zeitschr. f. d. gesammte Orn. 1885, p. 185, pl. x.) a Flycatcher intermediate between *Muscicapa atricapilla* and *M. collaris*, under the name of *Muscicapa semitorquata*, and stated that this form or species was the only one found in the Caucasus, and that he had examined six specimens from there, all of which agreed closely *inter se*.

I find, on looking over my series, that I possess one specimen of this form, an adult male, from Ortakeuy in Turkey, obtained by Robson on the 6th April, 1865, which agrees exactly with von Homeyer's description and plate. It appears

to me to approach much more closely to *M. atricapilla* than to *M. collaris*, and I am somewhat doubtful as to whether von Homeyer was justified in according to it specific rank ; but if, as stated by him, this form alone inhabits the Caucasus, it should at all events be regarded as a local race.

Dr. Radde ('Ornis Caucasica,' p. 286) remarks that out of more than a hundred examples of Pied Flycatchers sent to him from Lenkoran he did not find a single typical *M. collaris*, but that they differed curiously from true *M. atricapilla*, and had a peculiar tendency towards *M. collaris*. This confirms von Homeyer's statement. Moreover Dr. Radde gives a careful description of his specimens, which tends to show that, though they vary somewhat, yet they all seem to be referable to von Homeyer's *M. semitorquata*.

I cannot say whether this form is found in Persia, as all the specimens of Pied Flycatchers brought back by Mr. Blanford were, as he says, in immature plumage. I have examined the series in the British Museum, and do not find any specimen referable to the present form. According to Dr. Sharpe, however (*Ibis*, 1891, p. 110), a specimen received from Bushire agrees with von Homeyer's description of *M. semitorquata*.

XXXII.—*On a Collection of Birds from Erzeroom.*

By H. E. DRESSER, F.L.S., F.Z.S.

IN 1880 my friend the late Mr. James Zohrab, who was then H.M. Consul at Erzeroom, made a collection of skins and eggs, which he sent to me soon afterwards. I made a careful examination of the collection, and drew up a list of them with notes, intending to publish it. I did not then carry out the intention, but put the list on one side. As, however, so little has been recorded relative to the ornithology of this district of Asia Minor, it may be of interest to enumerate the species obtained by Mr. Zohrab, so I give the list below ; and, as I have still in my possession nearly all the specimens referred to, I have been able to examine them and to revise the notes